

THE BIRD FRIENDLY COALITION

Building a Bird Friendly Future



ABOUT THE BIRD FRIENDLY COALITION

The Bird Friendly Coalition is a diverse network of organizations, institutions and individuals committed to supporting and innovating bird conservation approaches in a variety of sectors. Founded in 2020, the Coalition currently comprises 50 initiatives focused in the Western Hemisphere.

According to recent research, the United States and Canada have lost nearly 3 billion birds since 1970. The primary cause of this staggering decline is habitat loss driven by human activities like agriculture and urbanization. As indicators of the overall health of ecosystems, declining bird populations signal the deterioration of the environment on which we all depend. This coalition seeks to empower everyone—from industries to individuals—to conserve birds and their habitat.

Shared Challenges and a Shared Promise. While Bird Friendly initiatives are niche, they are growing. What began as a single shade-grown coffee certification at the Smithsonian has expanded to include diverse Bird Friendly product and lifestyle concepts around the world. By combining our shared conservation, outreach, and business development expertise to aggressively target shared objectives, the Coalition imagines a bold future: a global collaboration that empowers anyone, anywhere to live a “Bird Friendly” lifestyle, and where industries and governments are actively invested in Bird Friendly standards.

Join Us. We welcome universities, non-profits, research centers, industry, government agencies and individuals to collaborate in these efforts. To join or inquire about the Bird Friendly Coalition, please email BirdFriendly@si.edu.

Mission

The Bird Friendly Coalition aims to connect, guide and amplify initiatives that conserve native birds in landscapes where humans and birds interact.

Vision

We envision a world where everyone can “Live Bird Friendly”—where integrating and supporting bird conservation approaches becomes the norm for all producers, industries, governments and individuals.

Objectives

1. Integrate bird conservation into broader sustainability initiatives and policies
2. Increase awareness and value of practices that conserve birds among diverse audiences
3. Support and expand the scientific basis and rationale of Bird Friendly initiatives
4. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation metrics and protocols to track habitat, bird, market and economic responses

In this document, we define the purpose and potential of the Bird Friendly coalition (pg. 5), propose priority actions (pg 8.), initiatives (pgs. 10-14) and supporting institutions (pg. 15).



USDA Organic inspectors train to conduct Bird Friendly® coffee habitat audits in Colombia. Photo: Smithsonian Bird Friendly®



Western Meadowlark, Pronghorn Ranch, Wyoming, 18,000 acres enrolled in the Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon

THE COALITION TAKES FLIGHT



AGRICULTURE



FORESTRY



LIVESTOCK



BUILT ENVIRONMENTS



INSTITUTIONS

Since the 1990s, scientists and environmental conservation groups have pioneered Bird Friendly standards in working landscapes and built environments. Standards are used to differentiate products and guide land use across a diversity of farming, ranching, forestry, building, and backyard systems. Institutional support has been critical to develop the scientific basis of these standards, develop markets for Bird Friendly products, garner industry and government support, as well as to educate consumers and landowners. The Bird Friendly Coalition has gathered these initiatives and supporting institutions together for the first time to collaborate and share critical insights from over 20 years of Bird Friendly programs and projects.

What is “Bird Friendly?”

While many initiatives utilize a generic “Bird Friendly” title or consider themselves to be Bird Friendly, there is currently no common definition or shared branding for Bird Friendly products and actions. Despite this, our surveys reveal majority support for a universal definition of the term “Bird Friendly” that will empower a Bird Friendly Coalition to build demand and markets for Bird Friendly products and

actions. Support is strongest for a broad definition of Bird Friendly that encompasses products, lifestyle decisions, management standards, educational initiatives, and government and industry advising that collectively support the conservation of native birds.*

Setting Standards

Bird Friendly branded products currently opt for a gold-standard approach, which asks consumers to pay a premium for products with high conservation value for birds. However, this approach excludes the majority of producers and productive lands globally. Our surveys show support for including projects or products with a lower barrier to entry and continuous framework for improvement within a Bird Friendly coalition*. This strategy could expand the reach of coalition initiatives to some ~70-80% of all agricultural producers globally if the coalition invests in a scientific foundation for multiple Bird Friendly performance levels.

Supply and Demand

Bird Friendly products, along with most sustainably produced products, face a significant gap between supply and demand. Even long-standing programs,

*Responses gathered from 75 participants representing 45 conservation initiatives and supporting institutions in the Western Hemisphere and West Africa. Responses refined by a Bird Friendly strategy working group of 13 participants.



PRODUCE
Bird Friendly

Producers & Builders



PURCHASE
Bird Friendly

Buyers & Distributors
Market Partners & Brands
Consumers



SUPPORT
Bird Friendly

Outreach & Awareness Partners
Funders

LIVE
Bird Friendly

such as Smithsonian Bird Friendly® coffee, certify 10 times more coffee on the production side than is sold as a certified product. Increasing awareness and demand for Bird Friendly practices is critical to maintaining interest from producers, especially if these standards evolve to encompass more land and agricultural systems. A lower barrier to entry or continuous frameworks for improvement may also present some challenges to maintaining the demand for “gold-standard” performance level. Responses from Bird Friendly initiatives currently show mixed support for addressing these tradeoffs*. Future work will be needed to develop strategies to increase demand for Bird Friendly products and actions while incentivizing participation from industry and producers that fall below current standards.

To increase demand for Bird Friendly practices, the coalition will define the shared audience for “Bird Friendly” choices for the first time. Participants have already determined that this audience should be broader than the North American birder niche alone in order to increase the industry relevance of these initiatives and expand their potential environmental impact*. In support of targeting wide audiences, the coalition can create shared, user-tested messaging

that contextualizes birds within broader topics such as ecosystem function, climate change, and social and environmental justice to motivate adoption and promotion.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Independent Bird Friendly initiatives currently monitor and evaluate their success with different methods and metrics. The coalition supports collective monitoring and evaluating of habitat and bird species richness or diversity to collectively measure and communicate the effectiveness of initiatives for bird conservation.

The Bird Friendly Future

Just as previous environmental movements have successfully garnered mainstream action and enduring participation, we envision a world in which anyone can live Bird Friendly: where producing, purchasing and promoting Bird Friendly is considered the norm rather than the exception. This Coalition will create, inform and support inclusive, effective Bird Friendly products and practices and advocate for the inclusion of these practices in all industries, governments, working landscapes, built environments, individuals and lifestyles.



OUR COMBINED REACH

45

INITIATIVES
PARTICIPATING

2 MIL

HA GLOBAL
COVERAGE

6 MIL

COMBINED
CONSTITUENCY

Native grasslands depend on grazers like cattle to maintain ecosystem function, highlighting a potential win-win for grassland bird conservation and sustainable beef production. Photo: Mike Fernandez/Audubon

POTENTIAL COALITION ACTIONS

The following actions have been proposed by members of the coalition to further our shared objectives.

Objective	Priority Actions
1. Integrate bird conservation into broader sustainability initiatives and policies	A. Lead. Position ourselves as a leader in the integration of bird conservation and sustainability through regular, industry-focused outreach.
	B. Define practices that conserve birds throughout supply chains and life cycles in ways that are socially tractable, and economically feasible.
	C. Reduce barriers and improve incentives to conserve birds across supply chains (e.g. producer trade-offs, participation costs, incentive structures, etc).
	D. Focus messages that increase our relevance to industry partners.
	E. Channel industry funding. Ensure extractive industries are reinvesting funds in environmentally sustainable and resilient actions that actively conserve birds.
	F. Develop performance evaluations for industry sustainability initiatives , i.e. a Bird friendly scorecard or industry report card.
	G. Prioritize industry sectors based on opportunity to mitigate threats and maintain habitat for birds.
2. Increase awareness and value of practices that conserve birds	A. Conduct market research to better engage all audiences within potential bird friendly value chains.
	B. Define audiences. Define current and target audiences including consumers, producers, points of sale, advocates, and funders.
	C. Mainstream bird friendly. Develop strategies to make bird friendly products and actions more mainstream
	D. Develop value propositions. Develop tested value propositions to engage diverse supply chain actors.
	E. Increase value. Develop tested strategies to increase value and mitigate costs of meeting bird friendly practices.
	F. Unify branding. Develop a unified bird friendly brand or label.

Objective	Priority Actions
2. (Continued) Increase awareness and value of practices that conserve birds	G. Coordinate marketing. Develop a coordinated marketing strategy, unified messaging and joint campaigns.
	H. Consolidate choices. Create and maintain a consolidated hub for all BF product purchases and lifestyle choices.
	I. Recruit ambassadors. Recruit and train enthusiastic followers as local or regional ambassadors.
3. Support the scientific basis of Bird Friendly initiatives	J. Go beyond birds. Expand reach of bird friendly products and actions by collaborating with other biodiversity-friendly and sustainability initiatives.
	A. Form advisory groups by industry sector and region.
	B. Adopt an evidence-based framework. Integrate comprehensive literature reviews into decision making about habitat and management interventions.
	C. Publish a perspectives article about the Bird Friendly coalition approach to sustainability.
	D. Pose shared research question to address knowledge gaps.
	E. Apply for collaborative research funding to better understand impacts and increase local capacity and conservation investment.
4. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation metrics and protocols to track habitat, bird, market and economic responses	F. Consolidate information on the scientific basis of Bird Friendly practices on a BF coalition webpage.
	A. Recommend monitoring approaches. Review and/or develop efficient monitoring approaches that link interventions with conservation outcomes.
	B. Create tools. Create open source evaluation and monitoring tools to assess habitat and biodiversity (e.g smartphone apps, R-packages, google-earth engine trainings).
	C. Integrate practices among Bird Friendly initiatives by sharing monitoring and evaluation practices, tools, and experiences.
	D. Build capacity to evaluate and monitor by providing technical support for local community members, citizen scientists, auditors, and industry.
E. Communicate compliance. Transparently communicate compliance with and progress towards baselines.	

BIRD FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AND INITIATIVES

BEEF



COCOA



COFFEE



LANDSCAPES



WORKING LAND & SEASCAPES

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS



OTHER PRODUCTS



AWARENESS PARTNERS





A longtime Smithsonian Bird Friendly® coffee grower surveys a flower garden next to his plantation. Photo: Smithsonian Bird Friendly

ABOUT THE INITIATIVES

American Bird Conservancy's Bird Friendly Forests Guide was developed to increase bird habitat in working forests owned and managed by private landowners. BirdScapes are landscape-scale areas that provide or could provide an important contribution to sustaining or recovering at least one part of the full life cycle of targeted migratory bird species or groups of species. ABC has identified nearly 100 BirdScapes throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Audubon Vermont's Bird-Friendly Maple Project promotes forest management that integrates bird habitat conservation—for species like Wood Thrush, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager—with maple syrup production in the northeast. While all maple forests are inherently good for birds, those managed intentionally with birds in mind are better!

Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE) is conducting a Forest Land Restoration program by actively cultivating on a commercial scale a shade loving wild heirloom fine flavor cacao within degraded portions of land at the BFREE privately protected area in southern Belize.

Biodiversity Initiative works primarily in Africa with on-the-ground research that includes birds, bats, malaria vectors and agroforestry

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies works with diverse stakeholders from the Northern Great Plains to the Chihuahuan desert using science, education, and land stewardship to develop and promote economically viable and bird-friendly working lands practices.

BirdLife International's Southern Cone Grasslands Alliance is a regional effort to reconcile the needs of cattle ranchers with conservation. They have developed a Bird Friendly Beef Certification as a market incentive for ranchers that produce meat while providing habitat for birds.

The Bobolink Project, a collaborative initiative shared by Mass Audubon, Audubon Vermont, and New Hampshire Audubon, raises financial contributions from private donors that are distributed to working hay farmers in New England. These funds enable farmers to delay their harvesting activities, thus making it possible for grassland nesting birds to complete their nesting cycles. Participating farms are selected annually through an online application process.

Cafe Solar and its forest restoration carbon-trading based program coupled with carbon neutral processing and exports has been proven by years of scientific research to support the greatest number of forest-dependent bird species. CS is extremely supportive of bird-friendly, not just in marketing and labeling, but with actions on the ecosystems where birds actually live.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Coastal Solutions Fellowship Program supports local conservation and research initiatives throughout Western Hemisphere and coastlines. The program has developed strategies for shorebird conservation through good management practices in salt and shrimp farms of the Pacific coast of Guatemala.

Environment for the Americas connects diverse people to birds and nature and inspires the next generation of conservationists.

Humboldt State University and California Department of Fish and Wildlife: are developing a “wildlife-friendly” certification for cannabis cultivation.

Mesoamerican Development Institute is introducing forest-friendly coffee production & processing in the Yoro Biological Corridor in Honduras.

National Audubon Society’s Conservation Ranching Initiative unites scientists and ranchers to implement bird-friendly habitat management strategies that benefit grassland birds, ranchers, and consumers alike.

Observatório de Aves da Mantiqueira is an independent nonprofit initiative for the study and conservation of Atlantic Forest birds in Brazil, especially in the Mantiqueira mountain range. Their mission is to assist in filling in the gaps in the ornithological knowledge on the tropics and to strengthen the bridge between science, people and conservation.

Prairie Provides & the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association and the South of the Divide Conservation Action Program Inc. have been working with ranchers who direct market cattle sourced from native grasslands that provide critical habitat for grassland species at risk such as Greater Sage Grouse and Sprague’s Pipit and others.

Pronatura Noreste, A.C has developed best management practices to produce beef in Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands, this model has 4 pillars public policy,

management and restoration, training and environmental education, and research and monitoring. Implementing these four approaches, we envision a sustainable beef production in the northern Mexico. Helping birds, grasslands, and people.

The Red Siskin Initiative is conserving forest in migratory songbird habitat in Venezuela by helping producers obtain Smithsonian Bird Friendly certification. This also conserves habitat for the Endangered Venezuelan Red Siskin, and improves livelihoods for communities that practice traditional shade-farming.

Saving Animals From Extinction North American Songbirds’ goal is to reduce the threats to North American songbirds and secure sustainable wild populations of these species throughout their ranges. They achieve measurable successes by harnessing the collective strengths of zoos, aquariums, and partners through supporting education and on-the-ground conservation activities on AZA facilities, in the community, and at state, national and provincial levels.

SELVA studies avian responses to management practices in tropical agroecosystems while simultaneously promoting and implementing bird friendly practices in cocoa plantations, coffee farms, and silvopastures in priority areas for migratory and endemic birds in Colombia.

Smithsonian Bird Friendly® pioneered the Bird Friendly certification concept in 1996 and first determined the standards for Bird Friendly® coffee habitat. They have also conducted the preliminary research to establish science-based standards for production designed to conserve migratory songbirds in cocoa agroforests and at the landscape scale.

Smithsonian’s Virginia Working Landscapes promotes the conservation of native biodiversity and sustainable land use through research, education and community engagement. Current research relating to bird-friendly initiatives includes projects studying impacts of native grassland restoration and regenerative grazing practices on grassland bird communities on working lands.

SOH Conservacion is an NGO from the Dominican Republic dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services, migratory and endemic birds in the protected areas. SOH Promotes sustainable economic activities for the surrounding communities, like ecotourism and agroforestry, training farmers to apply bird friendly practices, and supporting local markets.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides information and assistance that reduces impacts on birds, including voluntary guidelines, best practice recommendations, and resources for conducting environmental reviews for bird-friendly projects. This information empowers the public to understand potential impacts from various activities and provides recommendations on how to avoid or minimize those impacts.

Wildlife Conservation Society promotes the production of rustic shade cacao and Jaguar Friendly chocolate bars made in Central American forested landscapes. WCS also promotes the production of rustic shade coffee as well as the sale of Bird Friendly® certified coffee at WCS zoos in New York City.

Working Land and Seascapes is a global network of stakeholders and researchers working together to implement sustainable solutions, enabling healthy, resilient and productive landscapes and seascapes.

Zorzal Reserve produces fine flavored, organic cacao while creating conservation solutions across hemispheres, protecting the Bicknell’s Thrush.



SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

American Bird Conservancy
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Audubon Vermont
BFREE
Biodiversity Initiative
Bird City Maryland
Bird Conservancy of the Rockies
Birdlife International
Birds Canada
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Canadian Wildlife Service
Coastal Solutions Fellows Program
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Cornell University
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Environment for the Americas
Georgetown Environment Initiative
Humboldt University
IMC Vida Silvestre A. C.
Indiana University of PA
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership
Mass Audubon
Mesoamerican Development Institute
Missouri Department of Conservation
Missouri Western State University
Great Plains Joint Venture
National Audubon Society
National Park Service
Nighthawk Advertising Solutions
Pronatura Noreste
SELVA

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association
Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center
Smithsonian National Zoo
Smithsonian Working Land & Seascapes
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
SODCAP Inc
The Nature Conservancy
Tulane University
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
University of British Columbia
University of Georgia
University of Massachusetts
University of Vermont
University of Waterloo
Wildlife Conservation Society
World Wildlife Fund
Zorzal Cacao

